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HOUSEKEEPERS CHAT

Thursday, Oct. 29, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Making the New Sleeves." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.
Bulletin available: "Fitting Dresses and Blouses."

---ooOoo---

What with the canning and preserving, starting the children in school this fall, and putting the house in shape for cold weather, we haven't had much time to think about making our own clothes for winter.

But here's a free Thursday. Uncle Ebenezer has oiled my sewing machine. Cousin Susan has put some new padding on the pressing board. And I'm planning to sit myself down and make a simple, tailored wool dress for the cold days approaching.

Sleeves are one of the home dressmaker's problems this fall. The long, plain, tight-fitting, one-piece sleeves with fullness at the elbow that are so much in vogue this season are not as easy to make as the loose raglan sleeves popular last year, or the kimona sleeves of a few years ago. These new, tight sleeves must fit perfectly if they are to look smart, trim and tailored. Also they must fit perfectly if they are to be comfortable. The fullness allowed for the elbow must be exactly at the elbow. Looseness or bulging in the wrong place---and the appearance of the whole sleeve--of the whole dress, in fact--is spoiled. If the elbow in the sleeve comes a little above or a little below the elbow of the wearer, comfort is lost and the dress has that tell-tale, homemade appearance.

But with a little care in fitting the pattern, then in cutting out the sleeve, and finally in making and finishing, even an amateur seamstress can turn out successful sleeves in this new style.

The first step, of course, is to see whether the pattern fits your arm. Arms vary in length and size, and sleeves must be adapted to suit them. You may be a perfect thirty-six everywhere else, yet have a size fourteen arm. Or you may be like me and own a pair of arms far too long for the patterns that suit me in every other measurement. The only thing to do in either case is to adjust the pattern to your size before you cut out the sleeve.

The very best way to make certain of a good fit is to cut the front, back and sleeves from inexpensive muslin or any old-left-over material, baste these pieces together and try them on. Often a sleeve seems to fit all

right until it is set into the dress. Then it is too late to make some of the necessary adjustments. Some people pin the paper pattern together and try it on, but there is danger of tearing the pattern, and paper never gives the same effect as cloth, anyway.

Baste the muslin pieces together making certain that your seam allowances correspond with those in the pattern. For example, if the directions on the pattern say that three-fourths of an inch is allowed for outlet seams and three eighths for all others, then you will baste just that distance from the edge.

Now slip into the muslin model and look in the mirror to see if it fits. Does the fullness come exactly at the elbow? If it does, you may proceed to cut your material according to the pattern as it stands. But you may find that the pattern is too long in the upper arm. In that case you will want to shorten this part of it. How to do it? Just fold a little tuck in the pattern straight around the arm about half way between armpit and elbow. If it is too long in the lower arm, pin in a tuck about half way between the arm and the elbow.

What if the sleeve happens to be short either above or below the elbow? Then, you'll just lengthen the pattern by cutting it straight across in either the upper or lower arm, and pinning in a strip of paper to make it longer.

Now that the pattern has been adjusted to fit your arm, you are ready to lay it on your goods and cut out the sleeves.

In this cutting-out process, accuracy is most important. Disasters can occur so easily if the pattern is laid on haphazardly and misses the straight of the goods, or if the sleeve is cut out carelessly.

"Take your time, move cautiously, keep your wits about you," a Civil War officer used to advise his men. It's just as good advice for the home dressmaker when she starts to cut out sleeves.

The first step is to make sure the pattern is going on the straight of the goods. Do you notice the large perforations or holes at about the middle of the pattern? When you lay the pattern on the goods, see that these follow the straight lengthwise threads of the material. Pin the pattern on at these points first thing to be sure it lies straight. Then smooth it out carefully and and pin it at just enough places around the edge to hold it in place while you cut.

I have a friend who claims that she doesn't need a table to cut her patterns on. She says she can cut a dress out on a feather bed, a rag carpet or even her lap if necessary. Sometimes her dresses come out well and sometimes they don't. It's all a matter of luck, she says.

I have another friend who cooks by guess. She doesn't believe in bothering to measure. A little of this, a shake of that, a handful of something else--and the biscuits or cakes go into the oven. Sometimes the result is good. Sometimes not. Just luck, she says.

As for me, I'm not much of a believer in luck, especially when it comes to cooking and dressmaking. So I'm in favor of a pattern that is measured to fit; a smooth, flat, even surface to lay the goods out on; and plenty of care

in cutting the material out.

Those notches put in the pattern to indicate where two edges should come together sometimes cause a new seamstress trouble. Of course, they should not be cut in the material as they are in the paper pattern, for that would make the seams ravel. They may be marked on the goods with chalk, or, even better, they may be cut out in the opposite direction from the way they are indicated on the pattern.

When the pattern has been cut out, unpin the paper and remove it. Then baste a line of colored thread straight down the center of the sleeve lengthwise and another line crosswise from the armpit. These will aid you when the time comes for adjusting the sleeve into the armhole.

The third step is sewing up the sleeve. Adjust the fullness at the elbow first. If the fabric is heavy, adjust the fullness darts or dart tucks to prevent bulkiness. If the fabric is thin, however, use gathers. When the fullness has been adjusted, pin the sleeve together, matching the notches.

Now stitch the seam. Then trim it even along the edges. Open it out and press it flat. You can finish it either by pinking or overcasting the edges, if the material is heavy. If the material is light and thin, you can turn it back and stitch it once.

Before you set the sleeve into the armhole--or the "armscye", as the dressmakers call it--make it gather a little or "cup" around the top to fit over the shoulder and arm joint. Lengthen the machine stitch and run a row or two of stitching from notch to notch in the line where the seam will come.

Next, pin the sleeve in the armscye, matching the notches and seams of the sleeve with those in the armscye. Ease in any fullness around the tip, pin at right angles to the sleeve at one-inch intervals and then baste.

Now is the time to try on the frock before a mirror and see if the sleeve hangs properly. Do the straight, lengthwise threads of the material hang straight down from shoulder to elbow? Do the crosswise threads go straight around the arm from the armpit? Is the fullness at the top of the sleeve eased in so that no pleats or gathers show? And no wrinkles appear when the arm hangs down at the side of the body? Does the sleeve seam follow the inside of the arm to the wrist without wrinkling? And, finally, is there plenty of room for freedom of movement with no pulling or drawing anywhere?

Then, if you finish the sleeves nicely at the bottom, your frock will certainly have good-looking, well-fitting, comfortable sleeves.

All you have left to do now is to decide on the right length and then finish the sleeve at the wrist. Put on a fine, inconspicuous binding, or finish in any other way that you choose.

Just two or three last words on this final job. Before you trim off the bottom of the sleeve, try the length with the elbow bent. The finished sleeve should come down to the point in the wrist where the thumb is joined to the hand. And the line around the bottom of the sleeve should follow the direction of the wrinkles around the wrist. After the dress is worn several times, the sleeve will seem shorter because of the take-up at the elbow. And here's a feminine secret: A long sleeve that comes down well over the hand,

always makes the hand look smaller.

That's a good many directions to give all in one piece, isn't it? Some of them may not stick in your memory when you get at making your sleeves. So I suggest that you take down off your shelves that bulletin called "Fitting Dresses and Blouses", and consult it when you are in doubt as to what step to take next. It contains very helpful hints about sleeves, as well as about the construction of the rest of your dress.

If you don't own this bulletin, write for a copy to me in care of this station or direct to the Dept. of Agriculture at Washington, D.C. The name, as I said, is "Fitting Dresses and Blouses" and the number is Fifteen-Thirty.

Friday: Questions and Answers".

